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Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

Letter dated 11 March 2009 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit a copy of the note, relating to missile practice in the Falkland Islands, dated 13 November 2008, submitted by the British Government (see annex), in response to the Government of Argentina's note verbale dated 28 October 2008, which was circulated as a document (A/63/745) of the General Assembly, on 2 March 2009.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 23.

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**

09-26662 (E) 200309

Annex to the letter dated 11 March 2009 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Her Britannic Majesty's Foreign and Commonwealth Office presents its compliments to the Embassy of the Republic of Argentina and has the honour to refer to Note No. 317/2008 of 28 October 2008 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of the Republic of Argentina.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

The United Kingdom firmly rejects the complaint by the Government of the Republic of Argentina concerning the recent missile practice in the Port Harriet Area of the Falkland Islands. The use of this practice range is routine and such activity is not a matter that requires prior notification. The United Kingdom would like to remind the Government of the Republic of Argentina that similar routine manoeuvres have occurred on numerous occasions over the past 26 years and have never before drawn a protest from the Government of the Republic of Argentina.

The United Kingdom firmly rejects the assertion that such missile practice runs counter to the "no surprises" policy or represents an expansion of the United Kingdom's military presence in the South Atlantic. The United Kingdom scrupulously respects the "no surprises" policy at all times and remains keen to build confidence and cooperate with the Government of the Republic of Argentina, both on military matters and in other areas where we believe cooperation in the South Atlantic would be of mutual benefit.

The United Kingdom would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the Government of the Republic of Argentina to the recent Yamana IV exercise conducted by the Argentine armed forces in September and October of this year. In contrast to the routine nature of the missile practice referred to above, Yamana IV warranted prior notification under the "no surprises" policy. The United Kingdom regrets the decision of the Government of the Republic of Argentina not to give that prior notification. Clearly such events can only serve to damage confidence and increase tension in the region. The United Kingdom would like to take this opportunity to remind the Government of the Republic of Argentina of the importance of prior notification when conducting large-scale military exercises. The United Kingdom will continue to respect all of its obligations in this area.

The United Kingdom believes that military-to-military contact over recent years has done much to improve trust and mutual confidence between our respective armed forces. The Government of the United Kingdom would like to reiterate its commitment to maintaining these valuable links, and hopes that both countries will ensure the exchange of information to allow adequate reciprocal knowledge on military activities in the South West Atlantic.

Oversees Territories Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London

13 November 2008